

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

S E C R E T LUSAKA 0575

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR RH ZA

SUBJ: RELAUNCHING THE RHODESIAN NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 043701

1. I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON ONE ASPECT OF THE PROPOSAL CONTAINED REFTEL ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS STILL SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION BEFORE BEING FINALLY AGREED UPON. IT APPEARS FROM THE SCENARIO OUTLINED IN PARAS 2 AND 3 OF REFTEL THAT THE BRITISH WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTACTING THE ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISTS AND OBTAINING THEIR COMMENTS ON THE GENERAL PROPOSITION. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS OF ANY PROPOSALS OF THE KIND OUTLINED WOULD BE LESSENED IF THE US DOES NOT TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN PRESENTING THEM TO THE NATIONALISTS ALONG WITH THE BRITISH. OUR REASONS ARE THE FOLLOWING:
(A) MANY HERE CONSIDER THAT ONE FACTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LACK OF SUCCESS AT GENEVA WAS OUR FAILURE

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TO ENTER INTO EARLY AND DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE NATIONALISTS INVOLVING THEM IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE MEETING. WE HEAR FREQUENT COMMENTS THAT THE US CONSULTED WITH EVERYONE EXCEPT THE NATIONALISTS (BRIEF MEETINGS WITH NKOMO NOTWITHSTANDING). THEY THEREFORE FELT UNCOMMITTED IF NOT ACTUALLY DRAGOONED INTO THE TALKS.

(B) THE ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISTS ARE VERY CONSCIOUS OF LACK OF DIRECT CONTACT WITH US IN THE PAST. WE HAVE HEARD SOME GRUMBLING THAT AMB YOUNG DID NOT MEET WITH ANY OF THEIR LEADERS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO AFRICA. THEY WARN THAT A SOLUTION IN RHODESIA MUST BE WORKED OUT WITH THE PARTICIPANTS AND THAT IT CANNOT BE NEGOTIATED THROUGH THE FRONTLINE OR WITH SMITH OR THE SOUTH AFRICANS. THEY DO NOT CONSIDER THAT THE BRITISH SPEAK FOR US.

(C) RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THE NATIONALISTS WERE HIGHLY OFFENDED BY RICHARD'S UNILATERAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE RECESS MADE IN SALISBURY AFTER SMITH'S TURNDOWN OF THE BRITISH PROPOSAL. THE PF'S REACTIONS TO RECENT BRITISH DEMARCHE CONCERNING THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROPOSAL FOR A HIGH LEVEL MEETING HAVE BEEN BARELY CIVIL.

2. AS A RESULT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY PROPOSAL WHICH CAME EXCLUSIVELY FROM THE BRITISH AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE PF. US BACKING AND COMMITMENT TO IT WOULD HAVE TO BE DEMONSTRATED BY DIRECT CONTACT. FURTHER, WE BELIEVE THAT CONTACT RESTRICTED TO THE BRITISH WOULD OFFEND PF ELEMENTS AND ADD FUEL TO THEIR COMPLAINT THAT WE ARE REFUSING TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THEM. LOW

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